change reform. The interconnection piece focuses on measures to stimulate competition.

Congress recognized that the timing and benefits of competition in rural areas remain speculative, as evidenced in the numerous rural safeguards in the 1996 Act.²⁴ In contrast, the unfinished universal service joint board is the admitted linchpin of the goal of evolving services, reasonable and affordable rates and services in rural areas.

With its focus on stimulating competition, the <u>Order</u> operates primarily to advance the immediate interests of competing carriers. Until universal service, infrastructure sharing and access reform are completed and harmonized, the measures to safeguard the interests of residential and rural consumers and their traditional universal service providers in the new environment will not be in place and proper economic entry signals will remain obscured. Thus, although the Commission urges that new "competition" must go forward under its interconnection regime pending review,²⁵ its own words support the contrary conclusion: A stay will prevent entry under the perverse marketplace signals that will remain in place until the rest

²⁴ E.g., section 251(f) (1) and (2) (rural exemption, modification and suspension relief from measures to "jump start" competition), section 253 (b) (preserving state universal service authority in preempting bans to competition); section 253 (f) (reserving state power to limit competitors in rural LEC areas to area-wide entry); section 254 (requiring "sufficient" universal service cost recovery to achieve national policy)' section 214(e) (providing for support to state-designated universal service providers) and section 259 (recognizing right of small and rural universal service providers to share infrastructure economics of scale of neighboring large ILECs under non - common carrier business arrangements).

See, Order of September 17, 1996, FCC 96-378 denying stay of GTE Corporation and Southern New England Telephone Company.

of the "trilogy" defines the post-Act competitive marketplace ground rules and effectuates the consumer safeguards Congress enacted.²⁶

III. CONCLUSION.

The RTC respectfully requests the Commission to grant this limited stay. Limited relief that stays the rules in sections 51.303, 51.405 and 51.809 is appropriate because the RTC has shown that there is a high probability that it will prevail on the merits in a challenge to these rules. A stay will prevent irreparable injury to the members of the associations and the rural customers they serve. The injury to petitioners from denial of a stay is greater than any conceivable injury that other parties would suffer if these rules are allowed to become effective immediately. A stay will promote the public interest by preserving the status quo pending the outcome of judicial review and ensuring an orderly transition to the new regime provided in the

The need for decisions applying the rural exemption provides a further concrete example of why, in the unique circumstances presented by this landmark legislation, a stay so issues on review may be resolved will affirmatively serve the public interest: The state must determine, in part, whether a bona fide request for exempted interconnection under section 251(f)(1)(b) "is consistent with section 254..." the Act's universal service section. Until the pending joint board proceeding to implement that section completes that task, it is simply not possible to determine how an interconnection burden will compare with the Act's universal service mandates.

Telecommunications Act. A stay will also benefit the public by preventing the wasteful expenditure of financial and personnel resources.

Respectfully submitted,

THE RURAL TELEPHONE COALITION

Margot Smiley Humphre

National Rural Telecom Association Koteen & Naftalin, LLP 1150 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 1000 Washington, D.C. 20036 (202) 467-5700

By:_

David Cosson
L. Marie Guillory

National Telephone Cooperative Association 2626 Pennsylvania Ave., NW Washington, D.C. 20037 (202) 298-2300

Lisa M. Zaina

Organization for the Promotion and Advancement of Small Telecommunications Companies 21 Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 700

Washington, D.C. 20036

(202) 659-5990

October 2, 1996

Before the FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION Washington, D.C. 20554

In the Matter of)	
)	
Implementation of the Local Competition)	CC Docket No. 96-98
Provisions in the Telecommunications)	
Act of 1996)	

AFFIDAVIT OF LAWRENCE C. WARE

Lawrence C. Ware, being duly sworn according to law, states as follows:

- 1. I am Vice President of the National Telephone Cooperative Association (NTCA). In that capacity, my duties include assisting NTCA members with business development, exploring ways that NTCA members may deploy emerging technologies, and responding to new regulations.
- 2. Prior to joining NTCA, I held general management positions in the telecommunications industry for 35 years which is inclusive of my 19 years of service as the general manager of the Garden Valley Telephone Company (Garden Valley) from 1977 to March 1996. Garden Valley is a rural telephone cooperative serving over 14,000 access lines and headquartered in Erskine, Minnesota. The company currently serves less than 3 subscribers per route mile of facilities in 24 exchanges. As general manager I was responsible for the day to day operations of the company which at times included referring to outside technical experts to help guide the company business decisions.

- 3. In addition to my position with Garden Valley, I have held other positions in the telecommunications industry that have involved me with the operating and development decisions of small telephone companies. I have served as a director and president of the Minnesota Telephone Association (St. Paul) and was founding board member and chairman of Minnesota Equal Access Network Services ("MEANS") (Plymouth), a group of approximately 60 teleos that collectively provide equal-access and operate a fiber optic network throughout Minnesota. Other work with small, rural telephone companies include my positions as chairman of NTCA's Industry Committee and my service on the National Exchange Carrier Association (NECA) Board of Directors from its inception until 1992. In 1991 and 1992, I served as NECA board chairman. Additionally, I have personally appeared before the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission and the Minnesota legislature on behalf of small telephone companies in Minnesota.
- 4. I am familiar with the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) First Report and Order issued August 8, 1996. This order purports to establish a framework of national rules implementing the local competition provisions of the Telecommunications Act of 1996. More specifically, the order details the rules implementing Section 251(f)(1) of the Act which provides for an exemption from Section 251(c) interconnection requirements as applied to rural telephone companies. The order and accompanying rules place the burden on the rural teleco to prove that it should be entitled to maintain the exemption in Section 251(f)(1) and seems to interpret a continuing exemption as an unlikely exception despite the significant differences between rural and other telephone companies. As a former general manager of a rural telephone company and as a long term administrator in the telecommunications industry in general, I can

attest to the impact these new rules will have on small, rural telephone companies.

- 5. The order also establishes a strict standard that must be met to meet the burden of proof on economic consequences. Section 51.405 (c) of the rules requires "an incumbent LEC [to] offer evidence that the application of the requirements of Section 251(c) of the Act would be likely to cause [an] undue economic burden beyond the economic burden that is typically associated with efficient competitive entry." Both the fact that the burden of proof has been allocated to the incumbent rural telco and that the Commission has further defined the burdens by a vague and unconventional standard and suggested that the exemption is reserved for exceptional cases are enough to provoke the prudent telephone company manager to make the necessary preparations to effectively deal with impending bona fide requests. The statute on its face, and the Commission proceeding to implement Section 251 did not convey to managers of small companies the impending issue of burden of proof and the cost that it entails. Now that the burden of proof has been placed on incumbent rural telcos (47 C.F.R. § 51.405) under very demanding standards, managers must face the fact that huge costs associated with attempts to meet that burden may prevent them from maintaining their exemptions contained in the Act.
- 6. The Commission's rules become effective on October 1, 1996, and as currently written, rural telephone companies such as Garden Valley will be forced to make substantial investments beyond those intended by Congress, if they have not done so already.
 - 7. According to section 251(f)(1)(B) of the statute, once a request is filed, the

state commission has 120 days to determine whether the exemption will be removed. Knowing the short span of time a rural telephone company would have once a request is made, a manager would have to complete certain tasks in advance of a bona fide request. To compile the evidence to prove that the bona fide request presents an "undue economic burden beyond the economic burden that is typically associated with efficient competitive entry," most incumbent rural LECs will have to hire outside experts to perform detailed studies. Because there are no detailed rules and no accepted industry practices for conducting TELRIC studies, the studies will require accounting, economic, and engineering expertise.

- 8. I have conferred with the engineering and accounting consultants currently used by Garden Valley to determine the cost of engineering design and TELRIC studies. In my capacity as general manager of Garden Valley I conferred with these same outside consultants for a number of years on matters requiring such studies. In speaking with the consultants with regard to this matter, I learned that the charge for a TELRIC study to determine the cost underlying charges for interconnection, unbundled elements and resale prices is estimated at \$30,000.
- 9. A TELRIC study must be preceded by an engineering design study to determine the cost of modern efficient plant. The professional engineering firm that I consulted quoted \$210,000 as the approximate price of an engineering design study. The charge for an engineering study upon which a TELRIC study would be based may be somewhat less. The firm typically performs such engineering and design work for small independent telephone companies

which will normally charge between \$15 and \$20 per access line. Of the small rural companies the firm services, Garden Valley because of its 14,000 access lines actually possesses the economies of scale to be offered the \$15 low-end of the range for the study. On a per access line basis, smaller rural telcos will have to pay more than the price quoted for Garden Valley for such a study. In my capacity as NTCA Vice President, I am aware that the average NTCA member serves 4,378 access lines, which means that the average member would pay approximately \$60,000 to \$90,000 for the required engineering study.

- small company would also have to hire legal counsel to advise its managers as to how to insure proper compliance with the rules and to prepare for hearings that would take place at the state commission. Again, the state commission has 120 days to act on the bona fide request even under the heavier standard the FCC has interposed which dictates the need for such preparations. A telephone company would be forced to hire counsel immediately in anticipation of the filing of a bona fide request because once the request is made, the 120 day period is triggered. It would be futile for an attorney and other consultants to try to prepare physical plant design cost studies and a case in this limited time.
- 11. There is also the matter of a manager and his staff's time being drawn away from the actual running of the company to attend to these matters. In this sense, the parties that matter the most are also disserved the most by the commission's new rules. The customers of Garden Valley and other small rural telephone companies lose the attention of their

management when their management is forced to devote time to litigating administrative proceedings. In a small company, the business of meeting with attorneys, consulting with outside experts, and making the general preparations necessary to appear in state proceedings is performed directly by the company's management. A proceeding to terminate the rural exemption is likely to have a significant effect on any small company and would require the direct involvement of its management.

losses that result when management and operational personnel are forced to divert time to needless administrative proceedings. The burden of proof rules will cause irreparable injury to rural telcos because they may have to expend large amounts of the company's financial and human resources in advance only to find the rules will be changed on appeal. Further, there is a strong likelihood that the telcos will not be able to meet the substantial burden contained in section 51.405(c). The burden of these costs will fall on those customers who are not attractive for competitors to serve. These customers will be deprived of the rural safeguards provided for in the 1996 Act and have no means of recovering the loss of this benefit.

The affiant says nothing further.

Lawrence C. Ware

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 27th day of August, 1996.

Votary Public

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I, Rita H. Bolden, certify that a copy of the foregoing Motion for Stay Pending

Judicial Review of the Rural Telephone Coalition was served on this 2nd day of October

1996, by first-class, U.S. Mail, postage prepaid on all parties on record in the

interconnection proceeding, CC Docket 96-98.

Rta H. Bolden
Rita H. Bolden

Chairman Reed E. Hundt Federal Communications Commission 1919 M Street, N.W., Room 814-0101 Washington, D.C. 20554

Commissioner Rachelle B. Chong Federal Communications Commission 1919 M Street, N.W., Room 844-0105 Washington, D.C. 20554

Mr. Kent Nilsson, Chief Network Services Division Common Carrier Bureau Federal Communications Commission 2000 L Street, N.W., Room 253 Washington, D.C. 20554

Janice Myles (1cc&1disk)
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, NW
Room 544
Washington, DC 20554

Robert J. Hix Vincent Majkowski Colorado PUC 1580 Logan Street Office Level 2 Denver, CO 80203

Ann Kutter
Douglas Elfner
NYS Consumer Protection Board
99 Washington Avenue - Suite 1020
Albany, NY 12210

Carol Weinhaus Telecommunications Industries Analysis Project University of Florida College of Business Admin. 121 Mt. Vernon Street Boston, MA 02108 Commissioner James H. Quello Federal Communications Commission 1919 M Street, N.W., Room 802-0106 Washington, D.C. 20554

Commissioner Susan Ness Federal Communications Commission 1919 M Street, N.W., Room 832-0104 Washington, D.C. 20554

International Transcription Service 2100 M Street, N.W. Suite 140 Washington, D.C. 20037

David L. Meier Cincinnati Bell 201 E. Fourth Street P.O. Box 2301 Cincinnati, OH 45201

Bruce Hagen Susan E. Wefald Leo M. Reinbold North Dakota PSC 600 E. Boulevard Bismarck, ND 58505

W. Benny Won #76385 Public Utility Section Oregon Department of Justice 1162 Court Street, NE Salem, OR 97310

Edward C. Addison Virginia State Corporation Commission Division of Communications P.O. Box 1197 Richmond, VA 23218 Richard A. Finnigan Washington Independent Telephone Assn. 2405 Evergreen Park Drive, SW Suite B-1 Olympia, WA 98502

Philip L. Verveer Sue D. Blumenfeld Thomas Jones Willkie Farr & Gallagher Three Lafayette Centre - 1155 21st Street, NW Washington, DC 20036

David Turetsky
Carl Shapiro
Antitrust Division
US Department of Justice
555 4th Street, NW - Room 8104
Washington, DC 20001

Andrew Joskow John Haynes Antitrust Division US Department of Justice 555 4th Street, NW - Room 8104 Washington, DC 20001

Barry Grossman Antitrust Division US Department of Justice 555 4th Street, NW - Room 8104 Washington, DC 20001

Michael F. Altschul Randall S. Coleman Cellular Telecommunications Industry Assn. 1250 Connecticut Avenue, NW Suite 200 Washington, DC 20036

Rachel J. Rothstein Ann P. Morton Cable & Wireless, Inc. 8219 Leesburg Pike Vienna, VA 22182 Howard J. Symons Sara S. Seidman Mintz, Levin, Cohn, Ferris, Glovsky and Popeo, PC 701 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW - Suite 900 Washington, DC 20004

Bridger Mitchell Charles River Associates, Inc. 285 Hamilton Avenue Suite 370 Palo Alto, CA 94301

Anne K. Bingaman Antitrust Division US Department of Justice 555 4th Street, NW - Room 8104 Washington, DC 20001

John Henly Antitrust Division US Department of Justice 555 4th Street, NW - Room 8104 Washington, DC 20001

Donald J. Russell Luin Fitch Antitrust Division US Department of Justice 555 4th Street, NW - Room 8104 Washington, DC 20001

James D. Ellis
Robert M. Lynch
David F. Brown
SBC communications, Inc.
175 E. Houston - Room 1254
San Antonio, TX 78205

Danny E. Adams John J. Heitmann Kelley Drye & Warren, LLP 1200 19th Street, NW Washington, DC 20036 Cindy Schonhaut Intelcom Group (USA) Inc. 9605 East Maroon Circle Englewood, CO 80112

Stephen R. Rosen Theodore M. Weitz Lucent Technologies, Inc. 475 South Street Morristown, NJ 07962

Brad E. Mutschelknaus Steve A. Augustino Marieann Zochowski Kelley Drye & Warren 1200 19th Street, NW - Suite 500 Washington, DC 20036

David W. Carpenter Peter D. Keisler Sidley & Austin 1722 Eye Street, NW Washington, DC 20006

Mark C. Rosenblum Roy E. Hoffinger AT&T 295 North Maple Avenue Room 324511 Basking Ridge, NJ 07920

Joel E. Lubin Richard N. Clarke AT&T 295 North Maple Avenue Room 3245I1 Basking Ridge, NJ 07920

Kent E. Lillie Shop At Home, Inc. 5210 Schubert Road Knoxville, TN 37912 Albert H. Kramer Robert F. Aldrich Dickstein, Shapiro & Morin, LLP 2101 L Street, NW Washington, DC 20037

Riley M. Murphy Charles Kallenbach American Communications Services, Inc. 131 National Business Parkway Suite 100 Annapolis Junction, MD 20701

Mary L. Brown MCI 1801 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20006

David L. Lawson David M. Levy Sidley & Austin 1722 Eye Street, NW Washington, DC 20006

Stephen C. Garavito Richard H. Rubin AT&T 295 North Maple Avenue Room 3245I1 Basking Ridge, NJ 07920

Karen E. Weis AT&T 295 North Maple Avenue Room 324511 Basking Ridge, NJ 07920

James A. Eibel Network Reliability Council II Secretariat 7613 William Penn Place Indianapolis, IN 46256 Christopher C. Kempley Deborah R. Scott Arizona Corporation Comm. 1200 West Washington Street Phoenix, AZ 85007

Thomas J. O'Brien Karen J. Hardie Office of the Consumers' Counsel 77 South High Street - 15th Floor Columbus, OH 43266

Glen A. Schmiege Mark J. Burzych Foster, Swift, Collins & Smith, PC 313 South Washington Square Lansing, MI 48933

Bradley C. Stillman Dr. Mark N. Cooper Consumer Federation of America 1424 16th Street, NW Washington, DC 20036

Stephen G. Oxley Wyoming PSC 700 W. 21st Street Cheyenne, WY 82002

Laura H. Phillips J.G. Harrington Dow, Lohnes & Albertson 1200 New Hampshire Avenue, NW - Suite 800 Washington, DC 20036

John G. Lamb, Jr. Northern Telecom Inc. 2100 Lakeside Boulevard Richardson, TX 75081 Robert S. Tongren David C. Bergmann Office of the Consumers' Counsel 77 South High Street - 15th Floor Columbus, OH 43266

Agris Pavlovskis Michigan Exchange Carriers Assn., Inc. 1400 Michigan National Tower Lansing, MI 48901

Peter A. Rohrbach Linda L. Oliver Kyle D. Dixon Hogan & Hartson, LLP 555 13th Street, NW Washington, DC 20004

Steven T. Nouse PUC of Ohio 180 East Broad Street Columbus, OH 43266

Werner K. Hartenberger Leonard J. Kennedy Dow, Lohnes & Albertson 1200 New Hampshire Avenue, NW - Suite 800 Washington, DC 20036

Stephen L. Goodman Halprin, Temple, Goodman & Sugrue 1100 New York Avenue Suite 650 - East Tower Washington, DC 20005

Wayne V. Black
C. Douglas Jarrett
Susan M. Hafeli
Keller and Heckman
1001 G. Street, NW - Suite 500 West
Washington, DC 20001

Mark J. Golden Robert R. Cohen Personal Communications Industry Assn. 500 Montgomery Street - Suite 700 Alexandria, VA 22314

Timothy R. Grahm Robert M. Berger Joseph M. Sandri, Jr. Winstar Communications, Inc. 1146 19th Street, NW Washington, DC 20036

Charles C. Hunter Hunger & ow, PC 1620 Eye Street, NW Suite 701 Washington, DC 20006

Mike Pabian Larry Peck Gary Phillips Ameritech 30 South Wacker Drive Chicago, IL 60606

William P. Barr Ward W. Wueste Gail L. Polivy GTE 1850 M Street, NW - Suite 1200 Washington, DC 20036

Leon M. Kestenbaum Jay C. Keithley H. Richard Juhnke 1850 M Street, NW - 11th Floor Washington, DC 20036

Madelyn M. DeMatteo Alfred J. Brunetti Maura C. Bollinger SNET 227 Church Street New Haven, CT 06506 Dana Frix
Maury C. Albert
Antony R. Petrilla
Swidler & Berlin, Chtd.
3000 K Street, NW - Suite 300
Washington, DC 20007

Laurie Pappas Texas Office of Public Utility Counsel 7800 Shoal Creek Suite 290-E Austin, TX 78757

Thomas P. Hester Kelly R. Welsh John T. Lenahan Ameritech 30 South Wacker Drive Chicago, IL 60606

Antoinette Cook Bush Linda G. Morrison Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom 1440 New York Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20005

Richard E. Wiley R. Michael Senkowski Jeffrey S. Linder Wiley, Rein & Fielding 1776 K Street, NW Washington, DC 20006

Rodney J. Joyce J. Thomas Nolan Ginsburg, Feldman and Bress 1250 Connecticut Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20036

Michael H. Hammer Michael G. Jones Jennifer L. Desmond Willkie Farr & Gallagher Three Lafayette Centre - 1155 21st Street, NW Washington, DC 20036 Genevieve Morelli Competitive Telecommunications Assn. 1140 Connecticut Avenue, NW Suite 220 Washington, DC 20036

Aaron I. Fleischman Richard Rubin Fleischman and Walsh, LLP 1400 16th Street, NW Washington, DC 20036

Paul B. Jones Janis A. Stahlhut Donald F. Shepheard Timer Warner Communications Holdings, Inc. 300 Stamford Place Stamford, CT 06902

Daniel J. Brenner Neal M. Goldberg David L. Nicoll NCTA 1724 Massachusetts Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20036

Charon R. Harris Jennifer A. Purvis Mintz, Levin, Cohn, Ferris, Glovsky and Popeo, PPC 701 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW - Suite 900 Washington, DC 20004

Jot D. Carpenter Telecommunications Industry Assn. 1201 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Suite 315 Washington, DC 20044

Andrew D. Lipman Russell M. Blau Swidler & Berlin, Chtd. 3000 K Street, NW Suite 300 Washington, DC 20007 Robert J. Aamoth Wendy I. Kirchick Reed Smith Shaw & McClay 1301 K Street, NW Suite 1100 - East Tower Washington, DC 20005

Mitchell F. Brecher Steven N. Teplitz Fleischman and Walsh, LLP 1400 16th Street, NW Washington, DC 20036

Richard J. Metzger Emily Williams Association for Local Telecommunications Services 1200 19th Street, NW Suite 560 Washington, DC 20036

Howard J. Symons Cherie R. Kiser Christopher J. Harvie Mintz, Levin, Cohn, Ferris, Glovsky and Popeo, PPC 701 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW - Suite 900 Washington, DC 20004

Saul Fisher William J. Balcerski NYNEX 1111 Westchester Avenue White Plains, NY 10604

David N. Porter MFS Communications Co., Inc. 3000 K Street, NW Suite 300 Washington, DC 20007

Paul Rodgers Charles D. Gray James Bradford Ramsay NARUC 1102 ICC Building - P.O. Box 684 Washington, DC 20044 Robert B. McKenna Kathryn Marie Krause James T. Hannon U S WEST 1020 19th Street, NW - Suite 700 Washington, DC 20036

Karen Finstad Hammel Montana PSC 1701 Prospect Avenue P.O. Box 202601 Helena, MT 59620

E. Barclay Jackson New Hampshire PUC 8 Old Suncook Road Concord, NH 03301

Stephen F. Mecham 160 East 300 South P.O. Box 45585 Salt Lake City, UT 84145

Sheldon M. Katz Vermont Department of Public Service Drawer 20 Montpelier, VT 05620

Rolayne Ailts SD PUC 500 E. Capital Pierre, SD 57501

Edward D. Young, III
Michael E. Glover
Leslie A. Vial
1320 North Court House Road
Eighth Floor
Arlington, VA 22201

Joel B. Shifman Maine PUC 242 State Street - State House Station No. 18 Augusta, ME 04333

Commissioner Lowell C. Johnson Nebraska PSC 300 The Atrium 1200 N Street, P.O. Box 94927 Lincoln, NE 68509

David Kaufman New Mexico State Corporation Comm. P.O. Box 1269 Santa Fe, NM 87504

Michael L. Ginsberg 160 East 300 South P.O. Box 146751 Salt Lake City, UT 84145

George E. Young Vermont Public Service Board Drawer 20 Montpelier, VT 05620

Terrence P. McGarty COMAV, Corp. 60 State Street - 22nd Floor Boston, MA 02109

Richard M. Tettlebaum Citizens Utilities Company 1400 16th Street, NW Suite 500 Washington, DC 20036 Robert A. Mazer Albert Shuldiner Mary Pape Vinson & Elkins 1455 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20004

Earl Pace BDPA 1250 Connecticut Avenue, NW Suite 610 Washington, DC 20036

Richard N. Koch 10 Lilac Street Sharon, MA 02067

Anne P. Schelle American Personal Communications One Democracy Center 6901 Rockledge Drive Suite 600 Bethesda, MD 20817

Alan Ciamporcero Pacific Telesis 1275 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Suite 400 Washington, DC 20004

Robert C. Schoonmaker GVNW Inc./Management P.O. Box 25969 Colorado Springs, CO 80936

Eric J. Branfman GST Telecom, Inc. 3000 K Street, NW Suite 300 Washington, DC 20007 J. Manning Lee Teleport Communications Group, Inc. One Teleport Drive Suit 300 Staten Island, NY 10311

John Crump National Bar Assn. 1225 11th Street, NW Washington, DC 20001

Dwight E. Zimmerman Illinois Independent Telephone Assn. RR 13, 24B Oakmont Road Bloomington, IL 61704

Aliceann Wohlbruck National Association of Development Organizations 444 North Capitol Street, NW Suite 630 Washington, DC 20001

Charles H. Kennedy James A. Casey Morrison & Foerster, LLP 2000 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Suite 5500 Washington, DC 20006

Charles H. Carrathers, III Hunton & Williams Riverfront Plaza, East Tower 951 East Byrd Street Richmond, VA 23219

Mark J. Tauber Kecia Boney Mark J. O'Connor Piper & Marbury, LLP 1200 19th Street, NW Washington, DC 20036 Paul Glist Cole, Raywid & Braverman 1919 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Suite 200 Washington, DC 20006

Dana Frix Swidler & Berlin 3000 K Street, NW Suite 300 Washington, DC 20007

Carolyn C. Hill ALLTEL 655 15th Street, NW Suite 220 Washington, DC 20005

Robert C. Glazier Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission 302 W. Washington Street Room E306 Indianapolis, IN 46204

Antoinette R. Wike North Carolina Public Staff Utilities Commission P.O. Box 29520 Raleigh, NC 27626

Jere W. Glover
David W. Zesiger
US Small Business Administration
409 Third Street, SW
Suite 7800
Washington, DC 20416

C.J. Cain Utilex, Inc. P.O. Box 991 Greenville, NC 27834 Anthony M. Black Bell, Boyd & Lloyd 1615 L Street, NW Suite 1200 Washington, DC 20036

Mark J. Golden Robert R. Cohen Personal Communications Industry Assn. 500 Montgomery Street Suite 700 Alexandria, VA 22314

Jerome K. Blask Daniel E. Smith Gurman, Blask & Freedman, Chtd 1400 16th Street, NW Suite 500 Washington, DC 20036

Veronica M. Ahern Nixon Hargrave Devans & Doyle, LLP One Thomas Circle, NW Suite 800 Washington, DC 20005

Joe D. Edge Richard J. Arsenault Tina M. Pidgeon Drinker, Biddle & Reath 901 15th Street, NW Washington, DC 20005

Charles H. Helein Helein & Associates, PC 8180 Greensboro Drive Suite 700 McLean, VA 22102

James Baller The Baller Law Group 1820 Jefferson Place, NW Suite 200 Washington, DC 20036 Fiona Branton Information Technology Industry Council 1250 Eye Street, NW Washington, DC 20005 John T. Scott, III Crowell & Moring 1001 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20004

R. Glenn Rhyne South Carolina PSC P.O. Drawer 11649 Columbia, SC 29211 Michael A. Rump Kansas City Power & Light Co. 1201 Walnut P.O. Box 418679 Kansas City, MO 64141

B.B. Knowles Georgia PSC 244 Washington Street, SW Atlanta, GA 30334 Stephen E. Morgan Ohio Edison Co. 78 South Main Street Akron, OH 44308

Linda R. Evers Ohio Edison Co. 76 South Main Street Akron, OH 44308 Marc A. Stone Fred Williamson & Associates, Inc. 2921 E. 91st Street Suite 200 Tulsa, OK 74137

Pete Wanzenried State of California 601 Sequoia Pacific Blvd. Sacramento, CA 95814 David Heinemann Julie Thomas Bowles Kansas Corp. Comm. 1500 SW Arrowhead Road Topeka, KS 66604

David C. Bergmann
Thomas J. O'Brien
Karen J. Hardie
Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel
77 South High Street - 15th Floor
Columbus, OH 43266

Colorado Independent Telephone Assn. 3236 Hiwan Drive Evergreen, CO 80439

Nebraska Rural Development Comm. P.O. Box 94666 Lincoln, NB 68509

Harold Crumpton Missouri PSC P.O. Box 360 Jefferson City, MO 65102 Brian R. Moir Moir & Hardman 2000 L Street, NW Suite 512 Washington, DC 20036

Maureen A. Scott Pennsylvania PUC P.O. Box 3265 Harrisburg, PA 17105

Lee M. Weiner Douglas W. Kinkoph LCI International Telecom Corp. 8180 Greensboro Drive Suite 800 McLean, VA 22102

Eric E. Breisach Christopher C. Cinnamon Howard & Howard 107 W. Michigan Avenue Suite 400 Kalamazoo, MI 49007

George Petrutsas Paul J. Feldman Fletcher, Heald & Hildreth, PLC 1300 North 17th Street, 11th Rosslyn, VA 22209

Anne P. Schelle America PCS, LP 6901 Rockledge Drive Suite 600 Bethesda, MD 20817

Gerard J. Waldron Donna M. Epps Covington & Burling 1201 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW P.O. Box 7566 Washington, DC 20044 Lawrence St. Blanc Gayle T. Kellner Louisiana PSC P.O. Box 91154 Baton Rouge, LA 70821

Jeffrey L. Sheldon Sean A. Stokes UTC 1140 Connecticut Avenue, NW Suite 1140 Washington, DC 20036

Robert J. Aamoth Jonathan E. Canis Reed Smith Shaw & McClay 1301 K Street, NW Suite 1100 - East Tower Washington, DC 20005

Ronald J. Binz Debra Berlyn Competition Policy Institute 1156 15th Street, NW Suite 310 Washington, DC 20005

Jonathan M. Chambers Sprint Spectrum, LP 1801 K Street, NW Suite M-112 Washington, DC 20036

Jonathan D. Blake Kurt A. Wimmer Covington & Burling 1201 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW P.O. Box 7566 Washington, DC 20044

Susan M. Gately Susan Baldwin Economics and Technology, Inc. One Washington Mall Boston, MA 02108 Colleen Boothby Laura F.H. McDonald Levine, Blaszak, Block & Boothby 1300 Connecticut Avenue, NW Suite 500 Washington, DC 20036

J. Christopher Dance Kerry Tassopoulos Excel Telecommunications, Inc. 9330 LBJ Freeway Suite 1220 Dallas, TX 75243

Weldon B. Stutzman Idaho PUC P.O. Box 83720 Boise, ID.. 83720

James U. Troup Arter & Hadden 1801 K Street, NW Suite 400K Washington, DC 20006

Gary L. Mann Texas Statewide Telephone Coop., Inc. 2711 LBJ Freeway Suite 560 Dallas, TX 75234

Robert J. Sachs Howard B. Homonoff Continental Cablevision, Inc. Lewis Wharf, Pilot House Boston, MA 02110

Frank W. Lloyd Donna N. Lampert Mintz, Levin, Cohn, Ferris, Glovsky & Popeo 701 Pennsylvania avenue, NW Suite 900 Washington, DC 20004 Paul J. Berman Alan C. Weixel Covington & Burling 1201 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW P.O. Box 7566 Washington, DC 20044

Thomas K. Crowe Law Office of Thomas K. Crowe, PC 2300 M Street, NW Suite 800 Washington, DC 20037

Prof. Nicholas Economides Stern School of Business New York University New York, NY 10012

Eric B. Witte Missouri PSC P.O. Box 360 Jefferson City, MO 65102

Chris Barron TCA, Inc. 3617 Betty Drive Colorado Springs, CO 80917

Brenda L. Fox Continental Cablevision, Inc. 1320 19th Street Suite 201 Washington, DC 20036

James U. Troup L. Charles Keller Arter & Hadden 1801 K Street, NW Suite 400K Washington, DC 20006 Michael J. Shortley, III Frontier 180 South Clinton Avenue Rochester, NY 14646

Margot Smiley Humphrey Koteen & Naftalin 1150 Connecticut Avenue, NW Suite 1000 Washington, DC 20036

Carolyn C. Hill 655 15th Street, NW Suite 220 Washington, DC 20005

Carol W. Northrop Christine M. Crowe Paul, Hasting, Janofsky & Walker 1299 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Tenth Floor Washington, DC 20004

Kathy L. Shobert General Communication, Inc. 901 15th Street, NW Suite 900 Washington, DC 20005

Mark J. Tauber Mark J. O'Connor Piper & Marbury, LLP 1200 19th Street, NW Seventh Floor Washington, DC 20036

Howard J. Symons Cherie R. Kiser Russell C. Merbeth Mintz, Levin, Cohn, Ferris, Glovsky and Popeo, PC 701 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW - Suite 900 Washington, DC 20004 Robert S. Foosaner Lawrence R. Krevor Laura L. Holloway Nextel Communications, Inc. 800 Connecticut Avenue, NW - Suite 1001 Washington, DC 20006

Richard J. Johnson Moss & Barnett 4800 Norwest Center 90 South Seventh Street Minneapolis, MN 55402

Alfred M. Mamlet Colleen A. Sechrest Steptoe & Johnson, LLP 1330 Connecticut Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20036

Richard Rubin Steven N. Teplitz Fleischman and Walsh, LLP 1400 16th Street, NW Suite 600 Washington, DC 20036

Don Schoer Alaska PUC 1016 West Sixth Avenue Suite 400 Anchorage, AK 99501

Joseph W. Waz, Jr. Beth O'Donnell Comcast Corporation 1500 Market Street Philadelphia, PA 19102

Gene P. Belardi MobileMedia Communications, Inc. 2101 Wilson Boulevard Suite 935 Arlington, VA 22201 Daniel M. Waggoner Davis Wright Tremaine 2600 Century Square 1501 Fourth Avenue Seattle, WA 98101

Susan Stevens Miller Maryland PSC Six St. Paul Street Baltimore, MD 21202

William J. Celio Michigan PSC 6545 Mercantile Way Lansing, MI 48910

Rebecca S. Weeks Carl Wayne Smith Defense Information Systems Agency 701 S. Courthouse Road Arlington, VA 22204

Thomas R. Gibbon Charles A. Zielinski Anthony M. Black Bell, Boyd & Lloyd 1615 L Street, NW - Suite 1200 Washington, DC 20036

Gerald M. Zuckerman
Edward B. Myers
Communications and Energy Dispute Resolution
Associates
1825 Eye Street, NW - Suite 400
Washington, DC 20006

David A. Gross Kathleen Q. Abernathy AirTouch Communications, Inc. 1818 N Street, NW Washington, DC 20036 David W. McGann Illinois Commerce Comm. 160 North LaSalle Street Suite C-800 Chicago, IL 60601

James N. Horwood Scott Strauss Wendy S. Lader Municipal Utilities 1350 New York Avenue, NW - Suite 1100 Washington, DC 20005

Ronald G. Choura Michigan PSC 6545 Mercantile Way Lansing, MI 48910

Mary F. Newmeyer Alabama PSC P.O. Box 881 Montgomery, AL 36101

Lawrence D. Crocker, III PSC of DC 450 Fifth Street, NW Washington, DC 20001

Timothy E. Welch Hill and Welch 1330 New Hampshire Avenue, NW Suite 113 Washington, DC 20036

Pamela Riley AirTouch Communications, Inc. One California Street San Francisco, CA 94111